

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 YEREVAN 000846

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR DS/CR/VF

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/13/2015

TAGS: [KFRD](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [TU](#) [AM](#) [RU](#)

SUBJECT: RUSSIAN OFFICIAL COMMENTS ON ARMENIAN BORDER SECURITY

Classified By: DCM A.F. Godfrey for reasons 1.4 (b, d)

1. (C) A Russian Border Guard (RBG) official posted in Armenia contends that the border with Turkey is porous and that locals easily cross at will. On the margins of a routine meeting to discuss consular fraud prevention, he told us he was concerned about the possibility of corruption at the airport and emerging fraud trends among Iranian travelers. End Summary.

POROUS BORDER WITH TURKEY

2. (C) The RBG monitors Armenia's 268 km land border with Turkey as well as Armenia's international border with Iran. On the Turkish border, RBG and Armenian Border Security personnel jointly occupy guard towers that are located approximately every 2 kilometers along the border. As of mid-March 2005, RBG Major Vitali Borodkin (please protect) asserted that, despite RBG efforts, the Armenian/Turkish border was porous and that ethnic Kurdish farmers were able to transport livestock back and forth across the border. He believes that while it is probable that RBG personnel are being bribed to allow passage, he thinks that it is also possible to cross the Armenian/Turkish border undetected.

3. (S) Borodkin stated that in the early 1990s, he heard rumors that the Kongra Gel (KKG) had sent people across the Armenian/Turkish border. He stated that while he had no specific information that this was still continuing, he believed that KKG personnel may still covertly cross the border to seek temporary refuge from Turkish authorities.

CORRUPTION AT THE AIRPORT

4. (SBU) Borodkin stated that travelers offer RBG personnel bribes daily at Zvartnots Armenian National Airport to overlook photo-substituted or fraudulently issued travel documents. He stated that one common service for petty bribery is to backdate entry stamps for travelers who have overstayed on U.S. visas and were returning to Yerevan. Borodkin candidly admitted that while he does his best to monitor and prevent passport control personnel from taking bribes, it was most likely a common practice. (Comment: The number of backdated stamps among visa applicants at CONS Yerevan has dropped since 2002. We continue, however, to identify this fraud on a routine basis. End Comment.)

5. (SBU) Borodkin said that the flight from Yerevan to Moscow to Los Angeles is notorious for Armenian nationals offering bribes to RBG personnel. According to Borodkin, travelers believe that if they can successfully board this flight, even if US immigration officials eventually stopped them, they could still apply for asylum and enter the US.

6. (SBU) Borodkin stated that the RBG arrested approximately 100 individuals who used fake, stolen or borrowed travel documents in 2004. The majority of the individuals were arrested at the Zvartnots Airport. He could only speculate how many evaded arrest by using legitimate "borrowed" travel documents, fraudulent documents, or by bribing RBG personnel.

IRANIAN CONNECTION

7. (C) Borodkin suspects that Iranian nationals may be using photo-substituted U.S. and European travel documents as a way to travel to the U.S. and/or Europe. He believes that one common technique would be for the U.S.-based Iranian Diaspora to send legitimate asylum documents to Armenia. Travelers in Armenia either photo-substitute these documents or use unaltered versions while traveling as imposters. Borodkin added that members of the Iranian Diaspora in Germany might be active in sending legitimate travel documents to Armenia for Iranians to travel and/or immigrate to Germany.

8. (C) Borodkin noted that at the Armenian town of Meghri, the major point of entry on the Armenian/Iranian border, RBG

personnel have noticed many suspicious travel documents used by Iranian nationals to enter into Armenia. While he had no specifics, Borodkin observed that many of these documents appear to be issued in the same office, or printed by using similar techniques.

19. (C) Borodkin stated that he has reliable contacts within the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB). He stated that the FSB notifies the RBG in Armenia about madrasses or equivalent religious schools in the region, and, when students graduate, their travel destinations. While Borodkin was not worried about Muslim radicals traveling to Armenia, he is concerned about the possibility of Armenia becoming a corridor to the North Caucasus or Europe in the future.

Comment

110. (C) Borodkin,s comments are likely exaggerated in order to convince us that Armenia would not be able to manage its border without the RBG. However, his insights show that the RBG is aware of Armenia,s problematic border control issues and their implications for the region. While some of our security assistance programs preclude participation by Russian officials, we see cooperation with the RBG on fraud prevention as very much in the USG's interest and will continue our practice of including them in appropriate events.
EVANS